

IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in this application.

1-5. (cancelled)

6. (currently amended) A method of electronically transacting the purchase of a commodity, which comprises:

a) providing an electronic system for purchasing commodities over a communication network and which system includes a computer database containing commodity information concerning at least one product or service which may be purchased at a [[real]] current time purchase price, and which purchase price [[that]] is locked-in at time of purchase, for at least partial consumption or use at a future date;

b) electronically pre-registering a purchaser including obtaining credit approval for deferred payment and providing the purchaser with a unique secure access code and authorizing the purchaser to purchase a quantity of commodity from the electronic system and;

c) the purchaser electronically accessing the electronic system and, upon verification of the purchaser's unique secure

access code, the purchaser selecting and purchasing from the computer database a quantity of a selected commodity at the [[real]] current time purchase price reflected in the computer database for redemption of at least a portion of the quantity of the commodity purchased at a future date at the locked-in purchase price to thereby ensure that the quantity of commodity purchased is not subject to future market price fluctuations and creating a quantity credit account in the computer database for the commodity purchased;

d) storing data in the computer database for the quantity credit account in an electronically accessible format; and

e) subsequently, at a point of redemption, electronically accessing the computer database and entering said unique secure access code and thereafter redeeming at least a portion of the quantity of the commodity previously purchased and adjusting the quantity credit account to reflect the portion of the quantity of commodity purchased that has been redeemed.

7. (previously presented) The method of claim 6 wherein at least a portion of the quantity of the commodity purchased is electronically transferred in the computer database by the purchaser in order to be redeemed by another entity.

8. (previously presented) The method of claim 6 wherein the redeeming is performed at a plurality of locations.

9. (previously presented) The method of claim 6 wherein the computer database includes a plurality of commodities and the purchaser purchasing discrete quantities of commodities for future redemption and adjusting the quantity credit account to reflect said purchases and redemptions.

10. (previously presented) The method of claim 6 wherein the purchasing and redeeming steps are performed over a computer network.

11. (previously presented) The method of claim 6 wherein at least one commodity is a brand name commodity and the purchasing and redeeming steps are effected with the same brand name of the commodity.

12. (currently amended) A method of electronically transacting the purchase of a commodity, which comprises the steps of:

a) accessing a computer database of commodity information which may be purchased by a purchaser at a [[real]] current time

locked-in purchase price and pre-registering the purchaser to authorize the purchaser to purchase quantities of commodities for redemption of at least a portion of the quantities purchased at a future date, providing the purchaser with a unique secure access code and thereafter the purchaser selecting and purchasing a quantity of a selected commodity at a real time purchase price reflected on the computer database to thereby ensure that the quantity of commodity purchased is not subject to future market price fluctuations and creating a quantity credit account for the commodity purchased;

b) separating said quantity credit account into discrete purchase blocks in the computer database, each block representing a different purchase made at locked-in ~~[[real]]~~ then current time purchase prices;

c) storing data for the quantity credit account in the computer database in an electronically accessible format;

d) subsequently accessing said stored quantity credit account data in the computer database in order to receive authorization to redeem and subsequently redeeming in physical form at least a portion of the commodity previously purchased and reflected in the quantity credit account for said commodity; and

e) thereafter, adjusting the quantity credit account to reflect the quantity of the commodity redeemed.

13. (currently amended) An electronic purchasing system for transacting the purchase of a commodity, which comprises:

a) a computer database including means for providing commodity information including a ~~[[real]]~~ current time purchase price of at least one commodity that may be purchased at the ~~[[real]]~~ current time ~~locked-in~~ purchase price for at least partial redemption at a future date regardless of price fluctuations in the commodity market price since a time of the purchase;

b) means for pre-registering a purchaser and providing the purchaser with a unique secure access code so that the purchaser is authorized to make purchases from the computer database of a quantity of said at least one commodity provided in the computer database;

c) means for the purchaser to purchase a selected quantity of at least one commodity provided in the computer database and means for establishing and maintaining a quantity credit account with respect to quantities of a commodity purchased at the ~~locked-in~~ ~~[[real]]~~ current time purchase price by the purchaser and for authorizing redemption of at least a portion of the quantities of commodities purchased at a future day; and

d) a commodity redemption module interfacing with said

computer database for authorizing ~~to redeem~~ redemption, in physical form, of at least a portion of the quantities of commodities within said quantity credit account.

14. (previously presented) The system of claim 13 including means within said computer database to permit at least a portion of a quantity purchased by the purchaser to be redeemed by a different entity.

15. (previously presented) The system of claim 13 wherein the means for the purchaser to purchase includes a computer server which is connected to said computer database.

16. (currently amended) The system of claim 13 wherein the computer database includes a plurality of commodity descriptions and [real] current time ~~current~~ pricing information with respect thereto.

17. (previously presented) The system of claim 13, wherein said means for the purchaser to purchase includes an Internet browser.

18. (previously presented) The system of claim 15, wherein said computer server is electronically connected to a point-of-sale

terminal.

19. (currently amended) The system of claim 13 wherein said means for the purchaser to purchase a selected quantity of at least one commodity ~~computer database~~ includes means for selecting and purchasing a quantity of a commodity in one of a plurality of different geographical price zones as identified within said computer database.

20. (currently amended) The system of claim 19 wherein said means for the purchaser to purchase a selected quantity of at least one commodity ~~computer database~~ includes means for converting quantities of commodity purchased between said plurality of different geographical price zones.

21. (previously presented) The system of claim 13 wherein the commodity redemption module is operable in conjunction with an encoded access device.

22. (previously presented) The system of claim 21 wherein said encoded access device is a magnetic memory device.

23. (currently amended) The system of claim 13 further

comprising:

e) a means for separating said quantity credit account into discrete purchase blocks, each block representing a different purchase made at a different locked-in current [[real]] time purchase price, and

f) means for combining data in said purchase blocks to provide a weighted average purchase value of same commodities in said quantity credit account in a format that can be compared with current market prices for the same commodities.

24. (previously presented) The system of claim 13 further including means for the purchaser to view and print transaction histories and account balances contained in said quantity credit account.

25. (previously presented) The system of claim 13 including means in said computer database to modify purchaser contact information and information concerning a profile of the purchaser and to modify the unique secure access code of the purchaser.